

AMENDMENTS TO THE DRAWINGS

The attached replacement sheet of drawings includes changes to Figs. 1 and 3 and replaces the original sheet including Fig. 1-3.

In Fig. 1, the plastic body 4 was redrawn with appropriate cross-hatching to identify it as plastic.

In Fig. 3, the thermoplast body 4 was redrawn with appropriate cross-hatching to identify it as plastic.

Regarding paragraph 3 of the Office Action, we submit that Figs. 1 and 2 do show every feature recited in amended claims 1 and 6. Specifically, in the embodiment shown in Fig. 1, ribs 9 form a gripping element disposed around the outer surface of the connecting piece 1. Fig. 2 shows at least two straight portions 10 arranged such that two straight portions on opposite sides of the connecting piece are parallel ... and a rounded portion 11 disposed between adjacent straight portions.

Regarding paragraph 4 of the Office Action, we submit that Fig. 2 shows a gripping element [that] comprises six straight portions, as recited in claims 2 and 7. Specifically, six straight portions 10 are shown on a rib 9, which forms a gripping element in the embodiment shown.

Applicant respectfully requests that the objections to the drawings in paragraphs 3 and 4 of the Office Action be withdrawn.

Attachments following the last page of this Amendment:

Replacement Sheet (1 page)

REMARKS

Claims 1-9 are pending in this application, of which claims 1 and 6 are independent.

A number of amendments have been made to the claims to clarify the language. No new limitations have been added. The Specification and drawings have also been amended as described above.

An amended declaration showing the correct filing date of December 5, 2005, has been filed along with this amendment.

35 U.S.C. § 112 Rejections

Claims 1-9 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, for failing to set forth the subject matter of Applicant's invention. It is believed that the amendments to the claims address the Examiner's concerns about the clarity and definiteness of the claims.

35 U.S.C. § 102 Rejections

Claims 1-5 were rejected as anticipated by Mazzacano et al. (EPO Patent No. EP 0 870 970 A2). We submit that Mazzacano does not disclose or suggest a connecting piece comprising, among other features, "... at least one gripping element disposed around the outer surface of the connecting piece ... , the gripping element comprising: at least two straight portions arranged such that two straight portions on opposite sides of the connecting piece are parallel, the straight portions forming gripping surfaces for a tool, and a portion which is arranged smooth between adjacent straight portions ...," as recited in amended claim 1.

Mazzacano discloses an adapter for a quick-fit coupling between a pipe and a system (Mazzacano col. 1, lines 44-49). The adapter "is characterized in that it comprises a metal insert that includes said thread and is made integral with an adapter body that includes said seat" (Mazzacano col. 1, lines 26-29). There is no description or suggestion of at least one gripping element that comprises at least two straight portions

arranged such that two straight portions on opposite sides of the connecting piece are parallel.

On p. 11 of the Office Action, the Examiner points to a region of Mazzacano's adapter as being equivalent to Applicant's gripping element. We disagree. This region of Mazzacano's adapter is "a robust external thread on which a ring nut ... will be screwed" (Mazzacano col. 1, lines 56-58). By virtue of the fact that this region is a thread for receiving a ring nut, it cannot have at least two straight portions arranged such that two straight portions on opposite sides of the connecting piece are parallel ... and a portion which is arranged smooth between adjacent straight portions, as recited in Applicant's amended claim 1.

Furthermore, Mazzacano does not describe any other features of the outer surface of the adapter. Specifically, Mazzacano does not disclose or suggest a connecting piece comprising, among other features, "... at least one gripping element disposed around the outer surface of the connecting piece ... comprising at least two straight portions arranged such that two straight portions on opposite sides of the connecting piece are parallel, the straight portions forming gripping surfaces for a tool," as recited in amended claim 1.

For at least this reason, we submit that independent claim 1 is patentable over Mazzacano. Since claims 2-5 depend from claim 1, we submit that these claims are also patentable for at least the same reasons.

35 U.S.C. § 103 Rejections

Claims 6-9 were rejected as unpatentable over Mazzacano. As discussed above in conjunction with claim 1, we submit that Mazzacano does not disclose or suggest a connecting piece comprising, among other features, "... at least one gripping element disposed around the outer surface of the connecting piece ... , the gripping element comprising: at least two straight portions arranged such that two straight portions on opposite sides of the connecting piece are parallel, the straight portions forming gripping surfaces for a tool, and a portion which is arranged smooth between adjacent straight

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portions ...," as recited in amended claim 6. We thus submit that claim 6 is not obvious over Mazzacano.

For at least this reason, we submit that independent claim 6 is patentable over Mazzacano. Since claims 7-9 depend from claim 6, we submit that these claims are also patentable for at least the same reason.

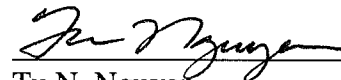
Conclusion

It is believed that all of the pending claims have been addressed. However, the absence of a reply to a specific rejection, issue or comment does not signify agreement with or concession of that rejection, issue or comment. In addition, because the arguments made above may not be exhaustive, there may be reasons for patentability of any or all pending claims (or other claims) that have not been expressed. Finally, nothing in this paper should be construed as an intent to concede any issue with regard to any claim, except as specifically stated in this paper, and the amendment of any claim does not necessarily signify concession of unpatentability of the claim prior to its amendment.

No fees are believed to be due. Please apply any charges or credits to Deposit Account No. 50-4189, referencing Attorney Docket No. 46401-016US1.

Respectfully submitted,

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